

Session 2

Opening Vision: A Nation in Rebellion

Isaiah Oracle by Oracle / Dr. Randy White

Isaiah 1:1-31

Session Purpose

To introduce Isaiah's overall structure and begin our study of Isaiah 1 by identifying the book's theme and setting (Judah and Jerusalem), then tracing the opening prophetic indictment: covenant charges against rebellion, the nation's collapse, and the Lord's rejection of hypocritical worship in preparation for His call to repentance and restoration.

Chiastic Structure of Isaiah

- A chiastic structure is a literary pattern where elements are presented in order, then repeated in reverse, creating mirror-like parallelism
- Named after the Greek letter chi (X), representing the crossing of elements
- The central element carries special emphasis and represents the main theme
- Outer elements correspond in reverse order (A-B-C-B'-A')
- Common in ancient Hebrew poetry and biblical texts
- Serves artistic and mnemonic purposes
- Helps readers remember passages while highlighting central theological points
- In Isaiah, helps prove a single author
- Serves as a "roadmap" for the journey.

Our Use of E.W. Bullinger

for our study, we are using the structure of E.W. Bullinger, as found in The Companion Bible. We have updated wording but kept the structure.

- A | 1:1–5:30 Opening Prophetic Indictments
- B | 6:1–13 Temple Commission and Scattering
- C | 7:1–12:6 Ahaz Narrative and Prophetic Signs
- D | 13:1–27:13 Burdens and Israel's Blessings
- D | 28:1–35:10 Woes and God's Glories
- C | 36:1–39:8 Hezekiah Narrative and Prophetic Signs
- B | 40:1–11 Wilderness Proclamation and Regathering
- A | 40:12–66:24 Closing Consolation and Restoration

Isaiah 1:1-5:30 - Opening Prophetic Indictments

Isaiah 1:1 - Title and Introduction

- "The Vision of Isaiah" is the name of the book.
- "Concerning Judah and Jerusalem" is the theme of the book.
 - Other nations are of interest in the book only as they intersect with Judah and Jerusalem.
- Chiefly, it is the salvation of Judah and Jerusalem through their Messiah, and is addressed to those of Judah and Jerusalem who were looking for Messiah.
- It takes place over the reigns of four kings, each of whose reigns are described in Scripture:
 - Uzziah - 2 Chronicles 26:1-23
 - Jotham - 2 Chronicles 27:1-9

- Ahaz - 2 Chronicles 28:1-27
- Hezekiah - 2 Chronicles 29:1-32:33

Isaiah 1:2-31 - Hear ye!

Covenant Charges Against a Rebellious Nation (vv. 2–4)

- This “heavenly summons” is common in Hebrew prophetic literature.
 - Deuteronomy 4:26, Deuteronomy 30:19, Deuteronomy 31:28, Deuteronomy 32:1, Psalm 50:4, Isaiah 34:1, Isaiah 49:13, Jeremiah 2:12, Micah 6:1–2
- The heavenly summons is used when there is a truth that goes beyond covenant or specific revelation.
 - The matter has to do with general revelation, the matter is built into creation itself.
 - That is, there is a truth that breaks natural law, goes against the character of God, and thus nature.
- The indictment: an animal knows its master, but Israel does not know its Lord.
 - Note: Israel is used collectively as the Jewish people, not specifically as the Northern Kingdom.
- The condemnation is in v. 4 - in addition to their iniquity and corruption (moral accusations) they “have forsaken the LORD” and “provoked the Holy One of Israel” (covenant accusations).
 - “Holy One of Israel” is used 25 times in Isaiah, used once by Isaiah in 2 Kings 19:22, and 6 times totally separate from Isaiah.
 - The nation had “gone away backward” -that is, turned their back on the Lord.

The Nation’s Total Moral and Social Collapse (vv. 5–9)

- God is at the end of His patience.
 - “Why should ye be stricken any more?” (v. 5) -that is, why any further discipline.
 - From “the sole of the foot even unto the head” (v. 6) they are suffering the wounds of discipline (yet seemingly to no avail)
 - The metaphors then gives way to geography: “your country. . . , your cities. . . your land. . .” (v. 7)
- Back to metaphor, “the daughter of Zion” (the nation) is described as “a cottage” and “a lodge” (v. 7). Both words imply weakness
 - Cottage - same word as tabernacle or booth
 - lodge - a trellis with a roof upon which cucumbers might grow

- Both are compared to “a besieged city.”

- Virtually nothing left, save “a very small remnant” which the Lord graciously saved.

Rejection of Hypocritical Worship (vv. 10–15)

- The Lord then moves from talking to “heaven and earth” to talking to “ye rulers of sodom. . . ye people of Gomorrah” (v. 10), speaking figuratively concerning the behavior of the Jewish people.
- The Lord then is livid in anger, asking the leaders to fully stop their hypocritical worship.
 - “My soul hateth” this worship (v. 14)
- The consequence: God will shut His eyes and ears to His own people (v. 15)
- Bottom line: “Your hands are full of blood” (v. 15)
 - Literally, “of bloods”
 - The plural is used when the accusation is guilt, whether the actual blood is on the hands or not.

Call to Repentance and Conditional Restoration (vv. 16–20)

- Very direct words in 16-20, and yet gracious in light of previous verses. God would be just to destroy them, but rather he gives them a chance.
- The matter could be summarized in “. . . cease to do evil; learn to do well. . .” (vv. 16-17)
- Verse 18 is one of the most familiar verses in Isaiah, yet misunderstood
 - It is not an invitation to “sit down and talk” and “lets work this out.”
 - It is more of the usage in a courtroom, “The prosecution reasoned before the court. . .”
 - The Lord says, in effect, that The judgment has come, and here is the verdict -”the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it” (v. 20)
 - vv. 19-20 give the verdict, and it is gracious:
 - * If. . . But If. . .
 - * The choice is up to the nation.

The Corruption of Jerusalem (vv. 21–23)

- The Lord gives the sad nature of the city of Jerusalem, which stands as the symbol of the nation.
- Once full of righteousness, now a harlot. Once silver, now dross. Once wine, now water.
- The leadership: “loveth gifts and follow after rewards.” That is, leaders for sale.

- The care of the fatherless and widow, such an important display of Jewish righteousness, is left undone.

Purging Through Judgment (vv. 24–26)

- The word “Ah” (hoy) (v. 24) in Isaiah is used to signal that something serious is about to be declared—usually a warning of judgment, though sometimes a strong call or invitation.
- The Lord says he will “ease me of mine adversaries,” and he is talking about His own covenant people.
- His coming judgment, though harsh, has good news in the end: “afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city” (v. 26).

Two Final Outcomes (vv. 27–31)

- These verses point to two bad outcomes:
 - A remnant which is a withering leaf in a dry garden
 - The rebels (v. 20) are burned and utterly consumed
- While that is the interpretation, it is necessary to parse the words, which are confusing due to pronoun usage:
 - Zion and her converts (v. 27) - this will become the “you/ye” in the passage.
 - * Zion - poetic language for Jerusalem, and representative of true Israel
 - * Zion will be “redeemed with judgment” and “righteousness”—words that imply punishment and a narrow escape.
 - Verse 28 moves to the transgressors (rebel, v. 20) who will be destroyed and consumed. They failed to become converts of Zion (v. 27).
 - * “They shall be ashamed of the oaks” (v. 28)

- Several modern versions change “they” to “you,” not because of a textual variant, but because some scholars think there *should* be a variant.
- The change is made because it makes the reading more natural, since “ye” is used later in the verse.
- I believe we should follow the text as written and then interpret it, rather than changing the text to fit our interpretation.
- They, then, is the rebels, and they will “be ashamed of the oaks,” a reference to oak-groves of pagan worship.
- * A parenthetical -vv. 29b-31a
 - “Which ye have desired” begins a parenthetical description of Judah and Jerusalem before this period of punishment.
 - Jerusalem desired these oaks, and shall be confounded
 - Jerusalem shall be as an oak whose leaf withers. . . and a garden with no water (v. 30)
 - Jerusalem’s strong (v. 31) shall be “as tow” (tow is what you get when flax is processed — the loose, frayed fibers that easily catch fire.)
- * Return from the parenthetical - v. 31b
 - “they” returns to the “they” of verse 29
 - “both” is the transgressors and sinners of verse 28
 - Thus, verse 31 closes in a message of destruction on Jerusalem.
- They key to verses 27-31 is two names and two outcomes
 - Zion - redeemed Israel
 - Jerusalem - Israel in Isaiah’s day, to whom the prophecy is given